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Libyan Bedouin MT9

[For information on the political role of the omda (umda) as a representative of the more powerful and numerous tribal segments within an administrative district, see Category 634.]

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Libyan Bedouin MT9

[Information on the Grand Sanusi of the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, religious head of the Sanusiya Order, will be found in Category 793.]

175 795 648 bat from al-Qasr joined the Sanusi army. The importance of their contribution to the Sanusi effort is vague, even though most of my informants claimed that their fathers "fought the British." Some of the al-Qasr activity was on a part-time basis. One informant, whose father was the paramount leader [124] of the 'Aishaibat tribe in 1916, told me that his father "used to take his rifle and ride out every morning to join the troops of Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif (the grandson of al-Sanusi al-kabiir), and there he would kill many British soldiers. Then he would come home again at night." There was at least one group of al-Qasr Bedouins who joined the Sanusi in Libya before the start of the war. After the end of the fighting, this group returned to Egypt and asked to be pardoned by the British. They appealed to the Governor of Marsa Matruh that there should be no reprisals taken against them since the Turks had actually forced them to fight for the Sanusi. The British Governor, who was fluent in the Bedouin dialect and considered a great man by the Bedouins, replied to them in the form of a famous Bedouin proverb: "The ropes can be stretched far enough for forgiveness."

175 177 554 •631 648 Traditionally, the Bedouins of the Marsa Matruh area were held in check by an officially created political structure which dated from the time of Muhammad 'Ali. This structure depended upon two political roles for the control of the Awlad 'Ali, the 'umda and the shaikh, neither of which had previously existed in the Bedouin authority system.

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Historically, the modern aspect of role differentiation and political specialization began with the appointment of Mitkhatri 'Adam at Sidi Barrani, west of Marsa Matruh. This was under Muhammad 'Ali Pasha. The new role was that of 'umda, the same term used for the village leader in the Valley of the Nile. The first Bedouin 'umda died in 1909. At this time, under the British, another political role was instituted. This new role, that of shaikh, was a kind of vice-'umda position. The son of the first shaikh is now about 80 years old and still lives in Marsa Matruh. (He was my chief informant for Bedouin history.) During this early period, there were few government officials in the desert, and, according to my informant, "there was need for only a few 'umdas and shaikhs. But later there was a need for more and more. The job of these men in those times was to work for the Egyptians in their dealings with the Bedouins of the desert." The number of incumbents in the offices of 'umda and shaikh increased as the political needs of the British grew.

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According to the Bedouins, the British administration did not arrive in the desert until about 1914. Up until that time, matters were in the hands of the Egyptians who governed the desert province for the colonial government. When the British arrived in Marsa Matruh, the opening of World War I was at hand. The Bedouins say, quite proudly, that the British knew of their sympathy for, and cooperation with, the Sanusi against the Italians in Cyrenaica.

175 Sanusi against the Italians in Cyrenaica. "When the British
648 reached Matruh, they jailed all of the 'umdas and shaikhs
554 (two 'umdas and five shaikhs, at that time). Then they chose
631 new leaders, from the families of the old leaders, to work with them." But, "these men did not fight with the British, they only acted as their guides in dealing with the Bedouins of the desert. When the old leaders were released from jail, they returned to their positions of political office. While they were in jail, their replacements had only helped the British with supplies." Apparently, the British saw the need [178] of maintaining the continuity of the Bedouin authority structure.

175 Data on the condition of the Bedouins of the Western
648 Desert between the two world wars are absent. The Bedouins say that they lived with no trouble, or any help, from the Egyptians. The Bedouins have no fond memories of their experiences during World War II. They first heard of the war in 1940 when the Italians marched into Western Desert from Libya. The Germans occupied al-Qasr from May to October of 1942, when the famous General Rommel had his headquarters at Marsa Matruh. The British had told the Bedouins, in 1940, that they should flee the Italians, and that unless they did they would be held responsible for their actions. Most of the
175 people of al-Qasr agreed to go to refugee camps at Amriyya
648 near Alexandria for the duration of the war.
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166 Some of the Bedouins refused to leave for Amriyya.
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view it, the Western Desert is the watan 28
131 ("homeland") of the Awlad 'Ali tribe, and is subdivided into
619 tribal zones each referred to as a mintaqa. Mintagit al-Qasr
• 631 is part of mintagit qabilit 'Aishaibat (i.e. "the area of
al-Qasr" is part of "the territory of the 'Aishaibat tribe").
131 Each tribal mintaqa is further broken down into contiguous
619 parcels of land belonging to lineages, and these are also
* 613 referred to as mintaqa; for instance, there is mintaqa
631 [423] 'ailit Ma'fas, i.e. "the territory of the Ma'fas family."
In the al-Qasr segmentary lineage society, genealogical
ties and local ties are coincidental. The boundaries of
al-Qasr are defined by the agnatic lines of the 'Aishaibat
tribe and include the sahil and sha'ir wi mar'a zones.

To the Egyptians, a qarya ("village") is a nucleated
361 cluster of permanent dwellings with some degree of social
631 integration: al-Qasr is a qarya for administrative matters.
The Bedouins, who think in terms of kin-based residence groups,
tribal boundaries, and political and economic symbiotic rela-
tions, see the Egyptian qarya as only a sector of al-Qasr.
They refer to this sector as the 'izba, i.e., "farm" or "rural
settlement." The 'izba is land fertile enough to support a
secure and sedentary life. "The 'izba," the Bedouins say,
"is the seed of the madiina" (city).

[121] For my own purposes, the Bedouin sense of al-Qasr is
the more useful concept. Al-Qasr is all of the territory of
[131] the 'Aishaibat tribe. Situated at 31°N and 27°E, al-Qasr is

directly on the Mediterranean coast. The 'izba sector is just 14 kilometers due west of Marsa Matruh, and about 300 kilometers due west of the coastal city of Alexandria.

In 1960, the population of the whole Western Desert was 98,000, the majority being of Bedouin stock. Considering that Egypt is a country with a 2 - 1/2 per cent rise in birth rate per year, the desert population would have been about 127,000 in 1965 when I was in the field. The town of Marsa Matruh, which is the capital of the Province of Matruh (formerly the Western Desert Province) has a population of about 7,000. With increasing economic and political concern for the desert provinces and the oases, this number should continue to rise.

Mintaqit al-Qasr (see Figure 4)[1] is an area which measures about six kilometers from east to west along the sea, and about ten to fifteen kilometers on a north-south line extending into the desert as far as the Libyan plateau. The population of al-Qasr is less easy to determine. In 1960, al-Qasr, by official count, consisted of 225 families, 595 males and 749 females, or a total of 1344 souls. Al-Qasr, as the Bedouins define it, includes the qarya and six other demographic sections separately defined by the Egyptian government. The population of this al-Qasr is 2,996, 1,287 males and 1,709 females. There is reason to doubt any census figures of the al-Qasr area because the Bedouins are reluctant to reveal their

1. [See p. 67--Analyst]

162 true numbers. As recipients of aid programs, their rations
114 are based upon the number of members per family. For these
[657] purposes, they are anxious to present as high a population figure as possible. They exaggerate their livestock count in order to receive more fodder, and, at other times, underestimate their numbers to escape taxes.

162 For purposes of this study, the Bedouin population of
161 al-Qasr is about 1,500 to 3,000. Most of this population lives
361 on the coastal area and in the cultivable wadi areas. The remainder is scattered south of the plateau region, near the
621 desert proper. The 'izba sector of al-Qasr may be described
*613 as a nucleated cluster or settlement, but due to the nature of the Bedouin segmentary lineage system, with its relatively autonomous kin-based residence groups, this sector lacks the usual degree of social interaction and integration associated
621 with the village or hamlet. The 'izba might be described as a
*613 multi-nucleated settlement or cluster. Each lineage has its
423 own mintaqa. Each mintaqa usually has a small dry-goods store
•631 owned and operated by a lineage member and catering chiefly
443 to his own lineage-mates. Water and land in the 'izba sector
423 are individually owned. In the barley-pasture area, rights
*613 and privileges of ownership are vested in the corporate group,
621 even though the Bedouins and the government claim that tribally
423 owned land is illegal. All land boundaries, whether a mintaqa or an individual's plot, are well-marked and well-known. The

His main function is to manage the affairs of the village, apprehend crininals, report and register births and deaths, collect taxes and represent the government in all matters involving the relationship between the government and his village. Because of his position as the representative of the govrernment, he usually enjoys a considerable amount of power which, over the years, many omdas have used it to obtain personal benefits.

In 1958 the committee appointed for the examination of the possibility of applying the system to Awlad Ali noticed that villages in the sense of a compact settlement similar to that existing in the rural area simply do not exist in the Western Desert region. There are a few settled communities in the area but they are scattered homes or a few stores. These communities have no identifiable boundaries or administrative existence. The area as a whole is divided into ten administrative districts, each having a police station. These districts correspond to the old Senusia Zawyas which played an important role in maintaining order in the era until the First World War. Until that time the area was divided into fourteen zones each of which was under the jurisdiction of one of the zawyas. The zawyas were mainly religious centers, or shrines, inhabited and directed by a member of the Senusi order of Cyrenaica. The role of the head of the zawya was to teach the Qoraan and spread the teachings of the Senusi order. One of the ways the zawyas attracted followers was through distribution of food and clothing to those who joined it. The zawyas also provided places of refuge for those who needed protection since no one could force his way into the sacred zawyas. Because of their religious position which put

795 Because of their religious position which put
195 them outside the tribal structure, the leaders of the zawyas played a
627 significant role in mediation and settling disputes between various tri-
793 bal segments. At their disposal was their ability to ostracize anyone
[626] who did not abide by their decision from the zawyas, which meant depriving him from all the benefits, social as well as religious, that membership in the zawyas offered.

795 After the First World War when the British replaced the Turks as
195 governors of the area, the zawyas were closed and the religious leaders
177 ordered to leave. The zoning established by the zawyas existed, however,
[648] and was used as the basis for the redistricting of the area. Police
[631] stations replaced the religious centers. From the standpoint of the tri-
[625] bal population itself, the districts have no psychological or political
619 reality. The zawyas were originally established in the areas of tribal
634 concentrations. But the area itself did not have any political identity.
[795] The only reality from the standpoint of the inhabitants was the tribal
[361] reality and affiliation which cut across many of these districts. Many of the tribal segments inhabiting one district were and still are hostile to one another. To transform the zones into administrative districts and
177 to establish one office of leadership for the whole district was to im-
634 pose a political unity nonexistent among the tribal segments inhabiting
619 the district. To avoid this difficulty, the government supplemented the
[622] territorial principle of the omda system in the rural area with the principle of tribal representation and came up with a system which seems to suite the situation in the Western Desert. For each of the districts, a list of all tribal segments which habitually occupy the area and whose tribal land is located within the district, is made. The most powerful

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
(1837-1942) Sanusi

*175 *648 651 them a reprimand on the double count of decrease in revenue and lack of security. It was essential, therefore, to get the Bedouin to pay their taxes without making too much trouble about doing so. To this end the Turkish administrative organization was largely directed. In 1879 the *Vilayet* of Banghazi was, *175 *648 631 in matters of civil administration, finally separated from that of Tripoli and in 1888 became an autonomous *sanjaq* directly dependent on Istanbul. It was governed by a *mutasarrif* nominated by, and directly responsible to, the Central Government. On him depended all the officials of the Administration, though the chief among them were appointed by the Imperial Government. The senior officials were usually Turks. The *175 *648 634 country was divided for administrative purposes into a number of districts, each under a *qaimaqam*, except that of Banghazi, which came directly under the Governor himself; and all except the Aujila-Jalu and Kufra districts were further divided into *175 *648 634 619 sub-districts under mudirs. These districts and sub-districts followed tribal divisions and subdivisions as any administration in Cyrenaica must do, since the tribes and their sections are the fundamental social departments of the country. Hence sections of a nomadic tribe might be residing at any time in a sub-district different to that to which they were administratively attached, and even in a different district.

*175 *648 631 In his direction of the affairs of the administration, finances, and police, the Governor was assisted by an administrative council composed of the chief accountant, the secretary, the qadi, the mufti, and four elected members from the local population. Each *qaimaqam*, nominated by the Imperial Government, had an administrative council similarly composed. The mudirs, nominated by the Imperial Government on the proposal of the Governor, had no council established by statute but co-opted tribal Shaikhs when they wanted their advice or co-operation. In the towns there was a representative, called *mukhtar*, elected by the property-owning citizens for each ward, and at Banghazi and Darna there were urban councils of a simple kind.

*175 *648 634 It was the mudir in charge of a sub-district who had direct dealings with the Bedouin tribes and the lodges of the Sanusiya Order. In 1911, just before the Italian invasion, there were six districts including Kufra, which came nominally under the

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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Turkish administration in 1910, and the Banghazi district, which came directly under the Governor of Cyrenaica for administration. Attached to each district were the sub-districts shown in the list below,[1] in which the tribes attached to each sub-district are also given. The Bara'asa came under Banghazi, although they lived well to the east, for political reasons, the tribe being exceptionally rebellious.[2]

Districts	*Sub-districts*	*Tribes*
Banghazi (directly dependent on the Governor)	Suluq	'Awaqir
	Qaminis	
	Barsis	
	Sidi Khalifa	
	Slanta	Bara'asa
al-Marj	al-Marj	'Arafa and 'Abid
	al-Haniya	Darsa
Darna	al-Sallum	'Abaidat
	Tubruq	
	al-Banba	
	al-Qubba	
	Shahhat	Hasa
Ajadabiya	Marsa Braiqa	Magharba
Aujila and Jalu	—	Awajila and Majabra
Kufra	—	—

The administration was very slapdash by European standards. Indeed, Shaikh Muhammad 'Uthman says darkly: 'There is at Banghazi no organization, political, administrative, or financial. I say no more about this matter: it will be understood why.'[3] This was, of course, an exaggeration, for however simple the administration may have been, and perhaps for that reason, it worked—with a good deal of grumbling it is true, but without undue conflict. Revenue was collected and would have exceeded the cost of the very cheap administration of the country if the proceeds of some taxes had not been sent to Istanbul. Much of this revenue came from import and export duties, but the bulk of it was derived from taxes on herds and a tenth of the harvest in kind, the collection of which was in the hands of the mudirs. It was the task of these mudirs, who were generally literate

[1] *Notizie relative al Sangiacato della Cirenaica e alle Mudirie dipendenti dal Mutassarifato di Bengasi* (Ufficio Politico Militare), 1913.

[2] Fabrizio Serra, *Italia e Senussia*, 1933, p. 17; idem in *La Cirenaica*, 1922–3, p. 182.

[3] Op. cit., pp. 59–60.

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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hold their posts. In 1919 they began to establish civil government in the territory under their control and to extend their influence farther afield. On 31 October of that year Cyrenaica was given a constitution similar to that given to Tripolitania, and its parliament first met in April 1921 under the unlikely presidency of Sayyid Safi al-Din, the old enemy of the Italians in the Sirtica. The tribesmen, of course, elected their own Shaikhs. It held altogether five sessions up to March 1923, when it was closed down. From the Italian point of view the best that could be said for the constitution was that it implied a tacit acceptance of sovereignty and that a parliament brought their officials into personal touch with tribal leaders. Writers of the Fascist period, when the Wilsonian sentiments which inspired the Libyan constitutions were regarded with disfavour, strongly criticized the Government of the day for granting them. Thus Gaibi says that they were bound to bear evil fruit and that 'the Government thought to present itself as a magnanimous conqueror, and the Libyans thought it a beaten coward'.[1] The Bedouin certainly distrusted and despised the Italians and cared as little for their authority in Cyrenaica as their brothers cared for it in Tripolitania. About 100 of their Shaikhs met at Ajadabiya, where they issued a manifesto declaring that, constitution or no constitution, they would not tolerate the Italians outside the coastal towns, and there only as traders. To this insult the Government lamely responded by opening new conversations. After long discussions between the Colonial Governor, Giacomo de Martino, and 'Umar Pasha al-Kakhiya, representing Sayyid Idris, and an exploratory visit by Sayyid al-Rida to Rome, it was agreed that the *modus vivendi* of 'Akrama should be superseded by a new pact, the Accord of al-Rajma of 25 October 1920.

By this new agreement Sayyid Idris was given the hereditary title of 'Sanusi Amir' with the honorific address of Highness and was created Head of the autonomous administration of the oases of Jaghbub, Aujila, Jalu, and Kufra, with the right of using Ajadabiya as the seat of his administration. He was granted a personal monthly allowance of L. 63,000 (on the day of the signing of the accord the Lira was 92 to the Pound

[1] Agostino Gaibi, *Manuale di Storia politico-militare delle Colonie Italiane*, 1928, p. 531.

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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Sterling) and was allowed his own flag, the first place of honour after the Governor on official occasions, a salute of guns on official visits, and the use of an official steamer. Sums of money amounting to L. 93,000 were to be paid in monthly allowances to members of his family. In addition the Government undertook to pay the police and military necessary to maintain order within the area under the Amir's administrative control, and a further L. 2,600,000 to meet the Amir's general expenses, of which L. 300,000 was to be in gold, and half this sum, including the gold portion, was to be paid on the signing of the accord and the other half on the suppression of the armed Sanusi camps. The Italians also subsidized tribal Shaikhs and zawiya Shaikhs and they paid stipends to the Members of Parliament. Notables, zawiya officials, qadis, scribes, chiefs of irregular bands, political counsellors, and informers, were all on the Italian pay-roll. The Italians were, in fact, bribing the whole country to keep quiet. The Italian Government further undertook to act in agreement with the Amir in making appointments to posts within the territory entrusted to his administration; recognized his right to move about freely; permitted the oases to send representatives to the local parliament; allowed the population to keep their arms; and guaranteed exemption of the Sanusiya lands from taxation. It specifically and solemnly declared that it had no intention of expropriating Arab lands, privately or collectively owned, or endowments of the Order, in favour of colonists. On his side the Sayyid promised to aid the Government in the application of the new constitution; to suppress within eight months the camps and posts and other Sanusi organizations of a political, administrative, or military character in the territory not entrusted to his administration; to keep his army to 1,000 men, subject to increase by mutual agreement; to encourage trade and communications; and not to tax the population other than by collection of religious tithes without coercion.

It was felt by the Italian Government that though in this new pact it had to make considerable concessions it had gained in return a more definite acceptance of its claim to sovereignty over the whole of Cyrenaica, which was henceforth divided into two zones, Cyrenaica proper under direct Italian administration and the oases under Sanusiya administration. The Sanusiya,

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4,5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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as well as Italy, had been forced to compromise. Critics of the Fascist period were later to complain that the pact was a blow to Italian prestige in that it virtually recognized 'the existence of two distinct Governments',[1] and Macaluso goes so far as to say that the making of the Sayyid into an Amir 'was the ratification of the undisputed sovereignty of the Sanusiya in Cyrenaica'.[2] Even those who defended the agreement had to admit that the Order was not being treated as a purely religious body, but as a politico-religious fraternity and that there was, therefore, doubt about what its relations with the Italian Government were supposed to be. 'Amir' to the Italians meant Honorary Prince but it had a very different sense to the Arabs. It was, moreover, uncertain whether a seat at Ajadabiya implied that the warlike Magharba tribe of the *barqa* and the Sirtica came within the Sayyid's political orbit or not. On the whole one can say that the Sayyid, or rather the Amir, as we can now call him, bargained autonomy of the oases and the hinterland for his armed camps and administrative posts on the plateau. As he did not, in fact, disband these he may be said to have had the better of the bargain. After the Accord of al-Rajma was signed the Amir visited Rome.

The accord was supplemented by a further agreement known as *Sistemazione definitiva delle zauie* of 16 August 1921 by which nomination, suspension, and transfer of Shaikhs of Sanusiya lodges were to be in the hands of the Amir, but he had to give notice of these acts to the Government, and he promised to remove Shaikhs who embittered relations between the Government and the people. The Government undertook to pay the Shaikhs of lodges (in two categories of L. 900 and L. 600 a month), to hand back to the Order all lodges in its occupation, except those being used as forts, and to pay the sum of L. 500,000 as indemnity for lodges destroyed during the war.[3]

IV

The Italians pretended afterwards that 'Umar al-Kakhiya, who closely followed political events in Italy, had in bad faith, believing that the Socialists were in the ascendant and that

[1] Agostino Gaibi, op. cit., p. 463. [2] Macaluso, op. cit., p. 102.
[3] *L'Occupazione di Cufra*, 1931, pp. 62–3. On 16 August 1921 the Lira was 84 to the Pound Sterling.

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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Italy would therefore withdraw from her colonial adventure, advised the Amir to sign the Accord of al-Rajma in the hope that he would not have to carry out its terms. He was later to spend over 16 years in exile in Italy for his alleged duplicity. The Italians did not at this time charge the Amir with more than weakness when, after the stipulated eight months had passed, he had failed to carry out the terms of the accord, especially in the matter of the armed Sanusi camps.

These camps were supply points garrisoned by the remnants of the Sanusi army of 1917. Through them and from them the Sanusiya was exercising political control over the country and administering the tribes. The chief camps in 1917 were Ajadabiya, al-Shlaidima, Marawa, Khawalan, al-Abyar, Taknis, and 'Akrama. Each was under a *qaimaqam* and had its commandant of troops, its qadi for judicial proceedings, and its tithe collectors who collected from the Bedouin a tax on crops and flocks. With the development of the political functions of the Order alms had been transformed into taxes. Ajadabiya and al-Shlaidima had as their *nazir*, inspector, 'Ali Pasha al-'Abdiya. Al-Abyar and Taknis came under Sidi 'Umar al-Mukhtar, and Marawa, Khawalan, and 'Akrama came under Sayyid Safi al-Din.

When asked why these camps had not been broken up the Amir said that the accord had been very badly received by the Bedouin and that were it to be enforced hastily serious disturbances might ensue. He counselled caution. In addition to the continuance of the armed camps in defiance of the accord, the Italians also complained of concerted passive resistance, on the part of the Shaikhs of Sanusiya lodges and the Shaikhs of tribes, to collaboration with their officials; but either because they were not yet ready to use force or because they were convinced that the Amir was unable to dictate to his followers, and probably for both reasons, they continued to temporize.

By the further Accord of Bu Mariyam of 11 November 1921 the dissolution of the armed camps was confirmed, but it was agreed that until the Italians had strengthened their administrative control and political influence in the country the still-existing Sanusi camps should be held jointly. There were to be four so-called '*Campi Misti*', at al-Abyar, Taknis, Slanta, and 'Akrama, manned by Italian and Sanusi troops in the

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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*175 *648 712 701 ● 631 *795 proportion of 5 to 4, each controlled by its own representative. To these four was later added a fifth camp, al-Makhili, so that the Italians might establish themselves at an important watering-place of the southern nomads.

The new arrangement was fantastic. Two forces, each under its own officers and flag, each opposed to the other in every particular, were jointly responsible for the security and welfare of the country. What made it even more absurd in the eyes of later Fascist critics was the fact that the Sanusi soldiers in these camps received their rations and pay from the Italian Government they did everything to flout. It was, moreover, an admission on the part of the Italians that they were unable to enforce the accords they signed with the Amir if the Bedouin did not intend to carry out their terms, and that they could not establish themselves in the country unless the Sanusiya was ready *175 *648 631 *795 to allow them to do so. All that apologists for this new accord have been able to say in defence of it was that the Italian Government had by this time realized that nothing was in any case likely to come of all these agreements and in the end only signed it in order that, while formally respecting it, they might have time and opportunity to establish their authority among the tribes, particularly among the 'Awaqir, the western Darsa, the Bara'asa, and the 'Abaidat. The Rome Government, not wanting to increase its troubles by starting a new war in Cyrenaica, imposed a policy of appeasement on its restless Colonial Government. It was bad enough to have to face the anarchy in Tripolitania, and there was always a danger that if the situation in Cyrenaica deteriorated Sayyid Ahmad might return to raise again the standard of revolt. Sayyid Idris might be weak and at times difficult, but he was at least pacific. The harassed Governor was therefore instructed that he would have to continue the battle of words till it became feasible to open real hostilities. However, the Italian Government were mistaken in believing that the new accord would allow them to increase their influence in the country, for the Sanusiya, through its representatives in the 'Mixed Camps', came between the tribes and the Italians. It is generally admitted by Italian commentators that after Bu Mariyam the Government was only apparently in the ascendancy politically, while in fact the administration of the whole country outside the towns continued

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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in the hands of the Order. Nevertheless, the Rome Government at the time thought, or pretended to think, that the development of events was in their favour and that their propaganda was rapidly costing the Amir and his family their popularity in the country. They constantly, as the Bedouin say when speaking of this period, pushed a stick under the pot to keep it hot till they wanted it to boil over.

The situation at this time in Cyrenaica could not, in any case, have lasted for long. It became clear to all, even before the Fascists gained control in October 1922, that hostilities would sooner or later break out again and matters were being brought to a head by the Amir's attitude on the Tripolitanian issue. The Arabs of Tripolitania, finding themselves in difficulties, sought to extend their front against the Italians by reaching an agreement with the Sanusi, with whom in the past their relations, as we have seen, had not always been cordial. Their leaders held a meeting, at which Sanusi representatives from Cyrenaica were present, at Sirt at the end of 1921 which carried the decisions of the Assembly of Ghariyan a step farther by sending a deputation to Sayyid Idris at Ajadabiya in April 1922 to offer him the Amirate of all Libya. The Sayyid refused to commit himself one way or the other, for he was aware that the Tripolitanian notables who made him the offer had for the most part little regard for his person or for his Order and were merely trying to create a diversion which might draw off some of the Italian forces operating against them. To have replied 'Yes' would have brought him into conflict with Italy. To have replied 'No' would have alienated from him those Tripolitanian Arabs who genuinely sympathized with the Sanusiya. Faced with this dilemma he pleaded ill health early in 1922 and requested the Italian Government to permit him to visit Egypt for two years for rest and treatment. He also, according to Giglio,[1] made the strange request that Sayyid Ahmad be allowed to return to Cyrenaica. Both requests were refused. So was his offer, repeatedly made, to mediate between Italy and the Arabs of Tripolitania, and he was informed, in more forcible terms than he had been accustomed to expect from the Colonial Government, that any interference on his part in the affairs of Tripolitania would be considered a breach of the

[1] Giglio, op. cit., p. 98.

3:Evans-Pritchard E-4, 5 (1942-1944) 1949 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
(1837-1942) Sanusi

rendered in fighting faithfully for Italy.' On this point Balbo, who replaced Graziani, was equally emphatic: 'Chiefs do not exist any more—there are only citizens with equality of duties and rights.'[1] Tribal Shaikhs, therefore, were not asked to advise the Government or to co-operate with it in any official capacity and the subsidies they had received in the pre-Fascist and early Fascist periods were withdrawn. Cyrenaica under the Fascists was administered by decrees issued by a Governor directly responsible to the Minister for the Colonies at Rome. Under the Organic Law of 1927 a General Council with very limited advisory functions was allowed for, and Arabs chosen from the notables of the sedentary population and Shaikhs of the Bedouin tribes could be nominated to sit on it by the Minister for the Colonies on the recommendation of the Governor. Its constitutional importance was nil, because it never came into operation. It was replaced by the Law-Decree of 1934, by which Tripolitania and Cyrenaica became a single colony with the seat of its administration at Tripoli. The new colony was divided into four commissariats (Tripoli, Misurata, Bengasi, and Derna) and a military territory of the Sahara. Each commissariat came under a Prefect and was divided into administrative sections: departments, residencies, and districts, all under Italian officials. It was recognized that the Bedouin were divided into tribes and sub-tribes. At the head of each was a Shaikh chosen in accordance with tribal custom and nominated by the Head of a commissariat. The Shaikh of a tribe was personally responsible to the competent Italian authority for order and security within the tribal territory. His functions and powers were those accorded him by tribal custom. The Shaikhs of the sub-tribes came under his control and had within their sub-tribal areas functions analogous to his. All that this meant was that certain tribal Shaikhs were recognized as such in so far as they were held responsible for any shortcomings of the Bedouin, but were accorded no privileges and had no representation. Consultative councils, where allowed for, were composed of administrative officials. So long as the Bedouin obeyed the Government and submitted to whatever curtailments of their freedom and rights it chose to enact, they could stew in their own juice until the

[1] Italo Balbo, *La Politica Sociale Fascista verso gli Arabi della Libia*, 1938.